

Reading Passage

Comma Gets a Cure

Well, here's a story for you: Sarah Perry was a veterinary nurse who had been working daily at an old zoo in a deserted district of the city, so she was very happy to start a new job at a superb private practice in North Square near the Duke Street Tower. That area was much closer to her home, so she could walk to work easily.

Even so, on her first morning, she felt stressed. She ate a bowl of porridge, drank a full cup of coffee, checked herself in the mirror and washed her face in a hurry. Then she put on a plain wool dress and a fleece jacket, picked up her kit and headed for work.

When she got there, there was a woman with a goose waiting to talk to her. The woman gave Sarah an official letter from the vet. In the note the vet said he was convinced the animal was suffering from a rare form of foot and mouth disease, which was surprising, because as a general rule you would only expect to see it in a dog or a goat. Sarah was sentimental, so this made her feel sorry for the beautiful water fowl.

Before long, the goose with itchy skin began to strut around the office like a lunatic, which made an unsanitary mess. The goose's owner, Mary Harrison, kept calling, "Comma, Comma, come here." Comma, in Sarah's opinion was an odd choice of a name for a bird.

Comma was strong, so it would take some force to trap her, but Sarah had a different idea. First she tried gently stroking the goose's lower back with her palm, then singing a tune to her. Finally, she administered ether. Her efforts were not futile. In no time, the goose began to tire, so Sarah was able to hold onto Comma and sit on a stool and give her a relaxing bath.

Once Sarah had managed to bathe the goose, she rubbed her with a cool cloth and laid her on her right side. Then Sarah confirmed the vet's diagnosis. Almost immediately, she remembered an effective treatment that required her to measure out a lot of medicine. Sarah decided she should tell Mrs. Harrison that this course of treatment might be expensive — either five or six times the cost of penicillin. I can't imagine paying so much, but Mrs. Harrison — a millionaire lawyer — thought it was a fair price for a cure.